



**Impact Evaluation
of
"Eradication of Hazardous Child Labour in Bangladesh (2nd Phase)"**



Carried out by
Evaluation Sector
Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED)
Ministry of Planning
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

June, 2013

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of
“Eradication of Hazardous Child Labour in Bangladesh
(2nd Phase)”**



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Executive Summary

Introduction

Child labour due to abject misery and poverty constitutes a serious obstruction to accomplish Universal Primary Education and Millennium Development Goals in Bangladesh. It not only affects the welfare of individual child and the future of the nation, but also harms broader national development programmes including the Poverty Reduction Strategy Plan. Children forced out of school and pushed into labour to help their families make ends meet are denied the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills needed for gainful future employment, thereby perpetuating cycle of poverty (UNICEF, 2009). The dire consequence of this cycle is quite severe in the slum and shanty areas of the cities.

About the Project

Against this backdrop the present impact study has been undertaken to evaluate the performance of the 2nd phase of a pioneer project entitled "Eradication of Hazardous Child Labour in Bangladesh". It was sponsored and implemented by the MoLE. The long term objective of the project is to contribute to the elimination of the worst forms of child labour in Bangladesh. The short term objective is the withdrawal of 30000 child labour from selected hazardous works by imparting them NFE and SDT in anticipation to enhancing their employability. The project launched in July 2005, has an extended completion date of June 2009. The total allocation of the project was Tk. 2891.65 lac against 28 sub-sectors, and the total actual spending was Tk. 2660.33 lac. This implies that the project was able to spend about 92% of the estimated cost. To contribute to the systematic elimination and prevention of the hazardous/worst forms of child labour, the project was comprised of five components: (i) pursuing NFE, (ii) imparting SDT, (iii) promoting mass awareness, (iv) procuring tools and equipment for training, and (v) providing micro-credit facility to parents of beneficiary child workers. Due to various operational complexities like the failure to reach a consensus between the parties concerned on the provision of arranging banking services, the project has implemented all the components but the last one. Among these components, the first two incurred the spending of about 88% of the total expenditure, through 76 NGOs which act as implementing partners due to their involvement with the NFE and the SDT. Hence, the success or failure of the project depends on the NGOs in providing services to the child workers through the NFE and the SDT. But it took more than a year in selecting the NGOs and that was one of the main reasons for shortening the duration of the NFE from 24 months to 20 months.

Legal Provisions and Policy Measures on Child Labour

The study has been divided into four chapters. Chapter 1 provides an overview of child labour both in global and national contexts. It was followed by a discussion on constitutional provisions and legal and policy measures which are in practice in the country. Unfortunately, most of the legal provisions and policy measures related with the elimination of child labour in general and hazardous work in particular are seldom enforced in Bangladesh. To overcome the situation, the Labour Act 2006 was enacted and a few years later, the Ministry of Labour and Employment has adopted a National Child Labour Elimination Policy 2010. Both the Act and the Policy pronounced a framework to eradicate all forms of worst as well as hazardous child labour by 2015. Consistent with this policy, a list of hazardous work or occupations has been finalized on the basis of the recommendation of a committee of the MoLE in December 2010. But in the absence of a strong and meaningful enforcement mechanism, the implementation of this framework as well as the elimination of the worst forms of child labour/hazardous work from the said list still remains to be a distant dream.

Methodology and Limitations of the Study

Chapter 2 mainly dealt with the background of the study and methodological aspects along with the objectives of research, data collection and analyzing techniques. Since the study is explorative in nature, its main discussions and analyses have been based on opinion collection through questionnaire/interview from three different respondent groups: targeted child workers i.e. beneficiaries; parents of beneficiaries; and non-beneficiaries. However, it needs to be mentioned that the implementation of the project was completed in June 2009 and the data and information required for conducting its present impact study was collected in late 2012 i.e. after a lapse of about four years and this lapse has witnessed not only the dislocation of many respondents but also converted many of them from children to adults.

Findings of the Study

The information collected from nine areas of six divisions (compiled in Chapter 3) transpires that working children are prevailing in many segments of the society whereas among these who have been finding themselves in hazardous work are the worst sufferers. It has been found that male children are mostly involved in hazardous jobs under the formal sector and female children are involved in domestic chores. Although education is free and compulsory at primary level, however due to various indirect expenses a great majority of them are deprived from availing such opportunity. Many of them miss out on their right to education

because they do not have the time to go to school. On average they had to work 9 hours a day and 6.77 days in a week (see Tables 8 and 9). Besides, their working hours are mostly negatively correlated with school attendance. The resultant effect is that the children get stuck in illiteracy and ignorance thereby perpetuating the cycle of poverty and malnourishment. Under such circumstances, those who intend to do something meaningful for them including providing education and/or imparting skill development training should therefore focus on the promotion of integrated and improved learning opportunities, aiming at enabling them to stand on their own two feet. Undoubtedly, this is the fundamental impetus of the project, and it has been quite perfectly reflected in field investigation.

Weaknesses of the Project

About 95% of the respondents (see Table 23), for instance, want to have access to the SDT/OJT in different trade courses, which seemed to be a very interesting outcome. Likewise, about 83% of the respondents (see Table 26) want to pursue some form of education without any hesitation even though the majority of them have no education at all. However, the 'unrealistic' allowance given to them in the course of pursuing the NFE and the SDT seemed to act as an obstacle since when they engaged in work they earned much more than what they earned when they attend in education and training. Moreover, a great majority of their parents felt frustrated due to the non-availability of the micro-credit facility which was originally perceived as a device for their economic empowerment. Gross negligence on the part of the NGOs in ensuring infrastructural facilities of the multipurpose centers, in maintaining quality teaching and training, in organizing center-based local management committee and above all, in selecting and screening the children for the NFE and the SDT and delivering the allowances to them also aggravated the situation further.

Strengths of the Project

In spite of all such operational weaknesses and institutional limitations the specific contributions of the project are as follows: (a) the targeted children who are now in education would not otherwise have been in it without the intervention of the project. Among these, more than 50% had never gone to school; (b) skill training in different trades has made it accessible to these children and many of them in the meanwhile have withdrawn themselves from hazardous works; (c) there has been no significant drop out in both the NFE and the SDT, and more than 70% of the children, as is evident from table 22, demonstrated their affirmative opinion about

them; (d) the SDT and the NFE have boosted the confidences and attitudes of the children and encouraged by such positive attitudes and confidences, some of them have launched self-employment even though there exist limited opportunities to that end; (e) above all, the perceptions of the children and their parents/guardians along with community members toward education and training have been significantly changed, and the overwhelming majority (82.7%) of the children, as is shown in Table 26, wants to pursue these in any formal and informal centers if opportunities are available; (f) consequent upon the development of all these, the families of targeted child workers have been benefited. Many of their parents (81.2%) admitted that though such increase is not adequate enough for meeting the necessities of daily livelihoods, yet such intervention of the project have increased their awareness about type of job, education and social acceptance; and (g) the project appears to set the tone of conscientization about the rights and well-beings of child workers. From the FGDs, it seems that almost all stakeholders have opinion about the prospect of the project in social change.

Recommendations

Taken into consideration of these outcomes as the inspirational way out, a number of recommendations on the basis of experiences gained in field investigation and FGDs have been presented for consideration for a project with similarly defined objectives and institutional responsibilities. These are: (i) As implementing partners, the NGOs should be selected in accordance with the criteria designed explicitly for the purpose; (ii) A comprehensive and creditworthy database should be developed to regularly monitor project activities and impact, and more importantly to monitor the updated status of the children; (iii) A locally based project facilitating committee should be established with the involvement of all the stakeholders; (iv) The institutional arrangement for project management should be organized in such a manner where a full-time project director with a fixed tenure would be in charge with adequate authority and wholesale responsibility; (v) The policy makers and planners of government need to look into the issue in a holistic and integrated way rather than in a scattered way of initiating and executing piecemeal based ad-hoc nature of projects. The costs incurred in these projects can be

drastically curtailed if a unified and integrated permanent set-up based programme under the direction and supervision of the MoLE can be established; (vi) There should be a strong commitment from all levels of society including political leadership to curb corrupt practices at once and efforts must be taken to maintain integrity at all hierarchical echelons right from selecting and screening of children to that of procuring and distributing educational tools and equipment after training; (vii) The module/syllabi of different VTCs should be continuously developed or modified to cope with the changing realities of the situation, (viii) For ensuring transparency and accountability as well as avoiding overlapping and duplication in the SDT, NGOs should be specifically entrusted with the responsibility of imparting specific VCTs; and (ix) The capacity of the government, in particular, the MoLE and the Factory Inspectorate of it, in addressing the hazardous/worst forms of child labour throughout the country should be enhanced through strengthened institutional capability and also through the development of a creditworthy database of the child labour situation.